

NEW-YORK, SUNDAY, APRIL 9, 1911.

Fifty Years Ago Next Wednesday First Gun of the Civil War Was Fired

Here Are Recounted Some of the Stirring Scenes of the Bombardment of Fort Sumter and Also What Fate Later Years Had in Store for the Heroes of That Momentous Day.

By John Elfreth Watkins.

THE semi-centennial of Sumter's bombardment begins on Wednesday next, the 12th of "bloody April," mother month of wars and battles. From that date half a century back the first gun of the Civil War was fired in Charleston harbor against the "Bastille of the Federal Union," and thus was touched off the fuse which was to wind, serpent-like, through state after state, kindle the thunder roar of bloody battle after bloody battle, and keep afire a conflict that cost more than eight billion dollars in property and more than six hundred able-bodied men.

The long reunited nation will not celebrate this anniversary. Few men who heard the thunder of that battle are still among us. None who officered the old fort upon that memorable day are now alive. Witnesses of the battle who then were callow youths of twenty have now reached their threescore years and ten, if alive at all. The present head of the nation has no memory of that immediate time, for he was then a babe of three years and seven months, and his immediate predecessor in the highest office was but an infant of two and a half years, while the present senior general of our army hadn't reached his first birthday and was still in swaddling clothes.

THE PRECEDING EVENTS.

When South Carolina seceded, Fort Sumter, rising from a small shoal in the narrow neck of Charleston Harbor, was unfinished and unmanned, save by workmen. But within Fort Moultrie, near by, was a garrison of approximately twenty-five men under command of Major Robert Anderson, a native of Kentucky, a West Pointer and a veteran of the Black Hawk, Seminole and Mexican wars. His post at Moultrie being indefensible from land attack, he skilfully transferred his men and scant supplies to rowboats to Sumter at dusk on the day after Christmas, 1860. In the course of the passage the men in one of the boats were in danger of capture, and the project seemed on the point of being discovered through the approach of the steamer General Clinch, a rebel guard vessel, curiously named for the distinguished father of Major Anderson's wife. With presence of mind, Captain Doubleday, who was in command of the boat, turned back his coat, hiding the telltale official buttons, and removed his military cap, and directed his men to take off their coats, cover the muskets with them and assume such attitudes as would eliminate the suspicion that they were soldiers. Thus disguised, they created the impression that the boat was loaded with workmen passing between the mainland and Fort Sumter, and the General Clinch, after a brief stop at a short distance, passed on. Before abandoning Fort Moultrie its guns were disabled by spiking and the burning of the carriages. Charleston was in a fury next morning when she awoke to realize that the garrison had thus reached the strongest and most inaccessible work in her harbor, and Governor Pickens of South Carolina promptly demanded Anderson's return to Moultrie. But Anderson refused, and the Governor replied by taking possession of Moultrie and of all of Sumter's surrounding islands. Upon these he built batteries that were soon to show their teeth to the Union garrison. At Washington, Buchanan's Secretary of War, Floyd, demanded Anderson's withdrawal from Sumter, but when Buchanan refused the request the Cabinet disrupted, and Floyd failed to be succeeded by Holt, one of Anderson's brother Kentuckians.

BEAUREGARD IN COMMAND.

On January 9 the steamer Star of the West entered the channel of Charleston Harbor with men and supplies for Sumter, but the secessionists fired upon her from their masked battery on Morris Island. So she turned about and escaped seaward. Beauregard was assigned to command all of the Confederate forces within the zone of threatening trouble a few days before Lincoln succeeded Buchanan in the White House.

Things now began to happen. On April 10 Beauregard received orders from the Confederate government to demand the evacuation of Sumter, and refuse it if it refused. Anderson, who had food enough for four days only, agreed to evacuate April 15 unless he received supplies or was otherwise instructed, and on this reply he stood pat. He was at sea as to what Washington would do for him, for a messenger sent to him by Lincoln was detained at Charleston.

On the evening of the 11th the garrison retired, as usual, but at 3 o'clock in the morning was awakened by a gun, to behold a messenger in a small boat, approaching under a white flag. He brings an ultimatum from Beauregard that firing will commence within an hour, but Anderson does not confide in it to his men. He orders them back to bed, to stay until sunrise. Then he consults with his officers and awaits results.

Beauregard is on time. Promptly at the hour set a Confederate signal gun at Fort Johnson booms the command for all of the harbor batteries to unload their shot and shell upon Sumter; and in the following words is the opening of the bombardment described by James Chesler, a sergeant of the garrison, later to become a captain of the 3d Artillery:

THE FIRST GUN OF THE WAR.

Promptly at 4:30 a. m. a flash as of distant lightning in the direction of Mount Pleasant, followed by a dull roar of a mortar, told us that the bombardment had begun. The eyes of the watchers easily detected and followed the burning fuse which marked the course of the shell as it mounted among the stars and then descended with ever increasing velocity until it landed inside the fort and burst. It was a capital shot. Then the batteries opened on all sides, and shot and shell went screaming over Sumter as if an army of devils

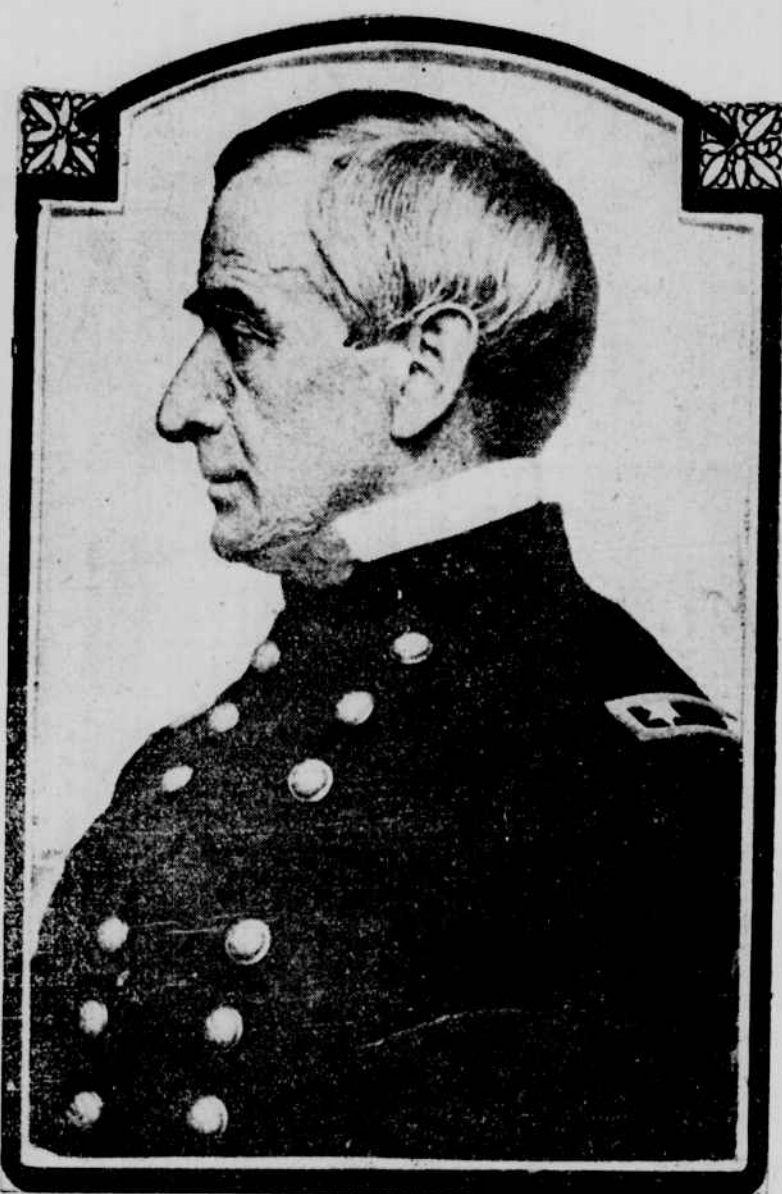
were swooping around it. As a rule the guns were aimed too high, but all the mortar practice was good. In a few minutes the novelty disappeared in a realizing sense of danger, and the watchers retired to the bombproofs, where they discussed probabilities until reveille.

The Civil War has begun. Sumter does not make immediate re-

tal pork and water. Then they are divided into two reliefs, each with a four-hour tour of duty at the guns.

As the day brightens the enemy's aim improves, and hot shot pour upon them from three points—from Morris, James and Sullivan islands, the last with its ironclad floating battery.

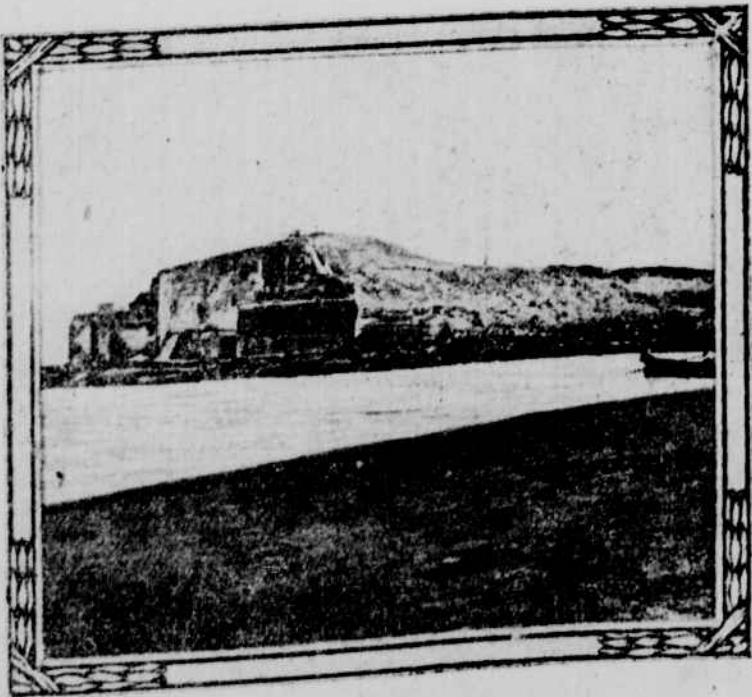
At 7 o'clock Sumter at last replies, but only with solid shot from her 82 and



MAJOR ROBERT ANDERSON, WHO DEFENDED SUMTER.



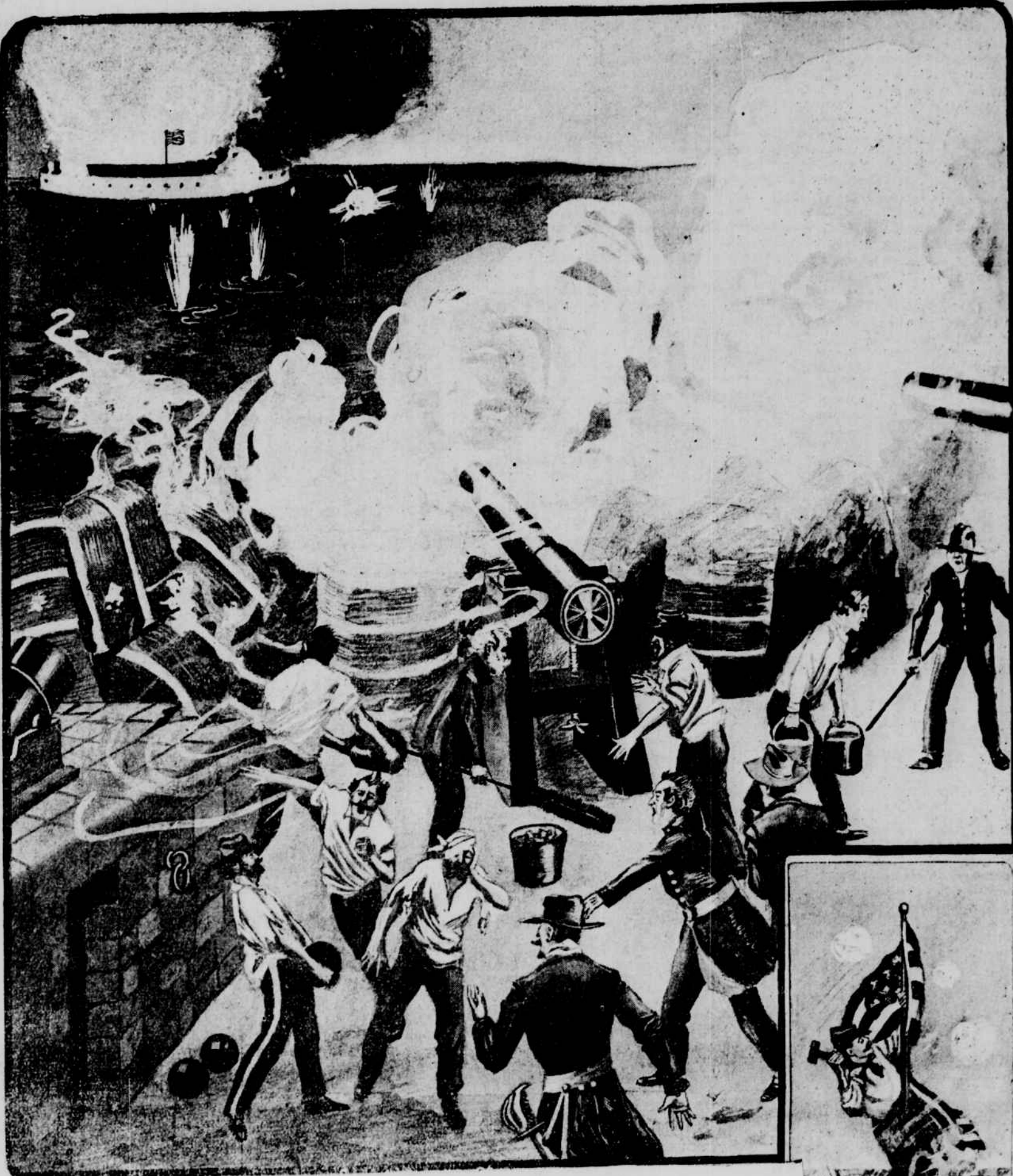
GENERAL BEAUREGARD, WHO ATTACKED SUMTER.



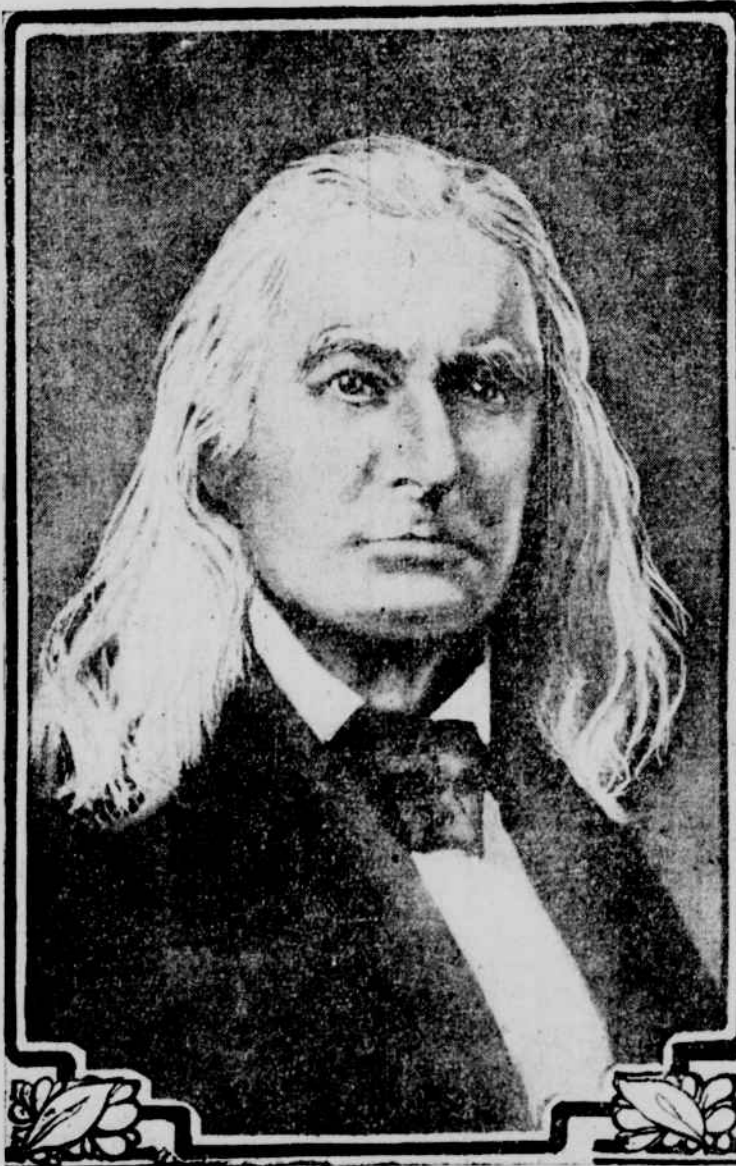
OUTSIDE VIEW OF SUMTER AFTER BOMBARDMENT.

ply. To save his ammunition Anderson will wait till broad daylight, when he can get sure aim at the enemy. As though nothing unusual were in the wind, he has his men formed for roll call under the bombproofs, and then orders them to their scant breakfast of rusty

42 pounders, which, like peas, bounce off the Confederate batteries. The great shell guns are unsheltered, and to save his men Anderson forbids their use, but Sergeant John Carmody steals up to the ramparts, where they are all loaded and roughly aimed, and he fires them, one by



THE ATTACK ON SUMTER.



EDMUND RUFFIN, WHO CLAIMED THE DISTINCTION OF FIRING THE FIRST SHOT IN OUR CIVIL WAR.

one. But being unable to reload them single handed, he crawls down from his perilous post. Then brave Surgeon Crawford ascends to the parapet, and beholds through the misty air a fleet of relief ships waiting without the bar.

A shell cuts the halliards of Sumter's flag and it runs down to halfmast, where it sticks beyond control. But the omen loses its evil charm. No ghost is given up from Sumter that day.

The night looms up black, the waves moan, the wind howls and Confederate shells drop into Sumter at regular intervals till morning, when the sun rises in splendor, and the enemy's fire is again increased to maximum.

At 9 o'clock Sumter begins to burn and the clouds of smoke nearly stifle the garrison, but it rights on. The barracks, officers' quarters and saltports are consumed, and the flames threaten the magazine. Fifty barrels of gunpowder are removed to the casemates and covered with wet blankets. The metal doors of the magazine are closed and banked over with earth. The tongues of fire menace the powder, and all except five barrels are thrown through the em-

brasures into the sea.

Sumter is now an inferno. The heat and vapor within are stifling. Ten times has her flagstaff been hit without giving way, but in the afternoon it is snapped near the peak and Old Glory comes tumbling down. Lieutenant Snyder rescues it and Sergeant Peter Hart, Anderson's plucky body servant, carries it to the ramparts, where he nails up the fragment of staff and flies it again, in defiance of the enemy.

In the midafternoon a cannoner is astonished to see a man's face appear at the embrasure, and ex-Senator Wigfall, of Texas, in citizen's dress, and waving a white handkerchief tied to a sword, is thought in. Seeing the flag fall, he had thought it a signal of surrender, and had hurried over from Morris Island. The startled artilleryman recovers his self-possession quickly and makes the emissary a prisoner and escorts him into the presence of Anderson. He says he will grant Anderson any terms he desires. Anderson says he will evacuate if permitted to take his arms, all private and company property, and to salute the flag of the United States as it is low-

ered, and conveyance to any Northern port desired.

Wigfall departs, and shortly officers representing Beauregard appear under a flag of truce. They are nearly smothered by the smoke which the wind now drives down into the fort and casemates. The faces of Anderson and his men are as black as those of stokers. All about them is a Dantean picture.

To these emissaries Anderson repeats the only terms he will accept. The peace messengers depart and there is an armistice till 7, when Beauregard sends word that Anderson's terms have been accepted by the Confederate government.

A FATAL SALUTE.

Next day the garrison salutes its flag and with drums beating and colors flying marches out of the ruins of Sumter to board a steamer and sail for New York. Although the bombardment had lasted thirty-four hours, within which 3,000 shot and shell had been hurled at Sumter, not a man within it had been killed or seriously injured. But by a perverse turn of fate one life had to be sacrificed inside her battered walls after the fighting was all over. During the ceremony of saluting the flag her ruins were still burning, and a spark from the dying fire entered the muzzle of a saluting gun, which exploded and killed Private Daniel Hough, who was buried inside the post, the new Confederate garrison uncovering beside his grave.

On the day after the evacuation Lincoln issued his first call for volunteers, and when the news of the bombardment reached New York mobs took possession of the streets and demanded that the Stars and Stripes be flown by every newspaper and private citizen whose loyalty was in doubt. When the Sumter garrison reached the metropolis officers and men were seized and forced to ride through the banner decked streets on the shoulders of a crowd mad with enthusiasm. Their money was refused by the merchants, the New York authorities voted Anderson the freedom of the city, the Chamber of Commerce voted him and each of his officers and men a medal, the citizens of Taunton, Mass., and of Philadelphia voted him elegant swords and he was the lion of the North.

ANDERSON'S MEN PROMOTED.

He and five of the officers who helped him defend Sumter became Union major generals by brevet or commission. These were Captain Abner Doubleday, Captain J. G. Foster, Surgeon S. W. Crawford, Captain Truman Seymour and Lieutenant Jefferson C. Davis, of Indiana, who was not related to the President of the Confederacy. The other officers participating in Sumter's defence were Lieutenants G. W. Snyder and Theodore Talbot, who both died before the war had fairly begun, and Lieutenant R. K. Meade, Jr., the only one of the garrison to join the Confederate cause. He also died soon after the war had opened. Major Anderson was at once promoted to brigadier general by Lincoln and placed in command of the Department of Kentucky and later that of the Cumberland. It was largely due to his ef-

forts that the National Soldiers' Home was established in Washington. He died in Europe in 1871, leaving an elder brother, Lazur Anderson, a Cincinnati capitalist, who married a daughter of the elder Nicholas Longworth.

The man who fired the first gun of the Civil War was Edmund Ruffin, a Virginia planter, who, when South Carolina seceded, went to that state and joined the Palmetto Guard, at Charleston. He was a member of the garrison upon the ironclad battery on Morris Island, and had the opportunity of firing the first shot as the oldest man within the works. He was then sixty-seven years old, and the accompanying portrait of him was taken by the great war photographer, Brady, soon afterward. He shot himself after Lee's surrender because he was unwilling to live under the United States government. He is alleged to have been the discoverer of the value of marl as a fertilizer. His claim to having fired the first shot of the war was disputed by partisans of Bishop Stevens, of the Methodist Church, who fired the first gun at the Star of the West, but historians generally accept the firing on Fort Sumter as the actual beginning of the Civil War. The first Union gun of that struggle was aimed by Captain Abner Doubleday, of the Sumter garrison.

LINKED WITH LINCOLN'S DEATH

The "Bastille of the Federal Union" remained in Confederate hands until the approach of Sherman's army, in February, 1865. In the latter part of 1863 attacking Union warships sent 20,000 shells into it, but although its walls became completely crushed the tons of iron projectiles imbedded in its ruins only added to its strength.

When Lincoln received news of the Confederate evacuation of Charleston he set apart April 14, 1865, the fourth anniversary of Sumter's evacuation by its loyal garrison, for a ceremonious re-hoisting of the old flag which Major Anderson had saluted and taken away with him. Anderson returned and raised the old flag himself during this ceremony, and Henry Ward Beecher delivered the oration of the day. That was Good Friday, which in 1865 came on April 14, just as it does this year. But President Lincoln never heard how his programme at Sumter's jubilee was carried out. A few hours after the ceremony closed he was shot by Wilkes Booth. And thus did Sumter mark the beginning and end of our quadrimum of blood.

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